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to it. The subject is disagreeable in the extreme, reminding one of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedie*. But the exposition of the constancy of Elvira and of the villainy of the English count is powerful. Certain parts would be a credit to even such a master as Tirso. It must be confessed, however, that the wing flags all too often. One might be pardoned for insisting upon the archæological interest of the scene at the bull fight. How modern are the cries of the *aguador* and *frutero*!

"¡ Agua y anís, galanes : ¿ quien la bebe ? . . .
 ¡ A ocho ciruela regañona !
 ¡ Avellanas tostadas, caballeros !
 ¡ Oh qué rico turrón ! Es de Alicante,
 y lo doy á cincuenta y dos la libra . . ."

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THE DATE OF COLERIDGE'S

MELANCHOLY.¹

Coleridge's "Melancholy: a Fragment," was printed in *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, with the statement that it was "First published in the *Morning Chronicle*, in the year 1794." Campbell in the *Globe* edition gives that date, but with a question mark, adding that he "searched the *M. Ch.* of 1794 for the verses, but without success."

Two years after the *Globe* edition was published appeared Mr. E. H. Coleridge's two-volume collection of his grandfather's *Letters*, including many that had not before been printed. Among these is one from Coleridge to Wm. Sotheby, dated Aug. 26, 1802, which seems to confirm the early date of the verses, though another paper is named as the place of first publication. Coleridge is acknowledging the receipt of a volume of Bowles's poetry that Sotheby had sent him :

" . . . I well remember that, after reading your 'Welsh Tour,' Southey observed to me that you, I, and himself had all done ourselves harm

¹ This note was written and sent to the Editors of *M.L.N.* before I knew that Mr. Coleridge had found the lines in the *Morning Post*. I have attempted to recast it in the proof,—not, I feel, very successfully.

by suffering an admiration of Bowles to bubble up too often on the surface of our poems. In perusing the second volume of Bowles, which I owe to your kindness, I met a line of my own which gave me great pleasure, from the thought what a pride and joy I should have had at the time of writing it, if I had supposed it possible that Bowles would have adopted it. The line is,—

Had melancholy mused herself to sleep.

I wrote the lines at nineteen, and published them many years ago in the 'Morning Post' as a fragment, and as they are but twelve lines, I will transcribe them :

Upon a mouldering abbey's broadest wall,
 Where ruining ivies prop the ruins steep—
 Her folded arms wrapping her tatter'd pall
 Had Melancholy mused herself to sleep.
 The fern was press'd beneath her hair,
 The dark green Adder's Tongue was there ;
 And still as came the flagging sea gales weak,
 Her long lank leaf bow'd fluttering o'er her cheek.
 Her pallid cheek was flush'd ; her eager look
 Beam'd eloquent in slumber ! Inly wrought,
 Imperfect sounds her moving lips forsook,
 And her bent forehead work'd with troubled thought.

"I met these lines yesterday by accident, and ill as they are written there seemed to me a force and distinctness of image in them that were buds of promise in a schoolboy performance."

The expression "I met these lines yesterday by accident" and the indefiniteness of the date of publication ("many years ago") suggest that he had the fragment before him in the shape of an undated clipping from the *Morning Post* while he wrote. Guided perhaps by this suggestion, the editor of the *Letters* has since found the earliest known print of *Melancholy*—in the *Morning Post* for December 12, 1797.² The five years between 1797 and 1802 may well have seemed many to Coleridge. Bearing in mind the lapse of time, the established tendency of romantic poets in general

² E. H. Coleridge, "S. T. Coleridge as a Lake Poet," *Trans. of the Royal Society of Literature*, xxiv, 110. It had escaped the notice of Campbell, who had "not detected any of Coleridge's contributions to the *Morning Post* before the beginning of 1798" ; and Dr. Haney in his Coleridge bibliography (1903) seems to have followed Campbell, listing *Fire, Famine and Slaughter*, Jan. 8, 1798, as Coleridge's first contribution to the *Post*.

and Coleridge in particular to assign early dates to their compositions, and the fact that Coleridge did print no less than ten poems in the *Chronicle* in 1794, we have probably a sufficient explanation of the assertion in *Sibylline Leaves* that the fragment was first printed in the *Chronicle* in 1794. 1797 is pretty certainly the date of the first appearance of *Melancholy*. The same year is also, notwithstanding what Coleridge wrote to Sotheby about the lines being a "schoolboy performance," the probable date of their composition.

The dating of so slight a fragment as *Melancholy* would not justify this lengthy note, even to a Coleridge student, were it not that the lines bear some internal evidence of belonging to a later period than Coleridge assigns them to,—to the most interesting and important period of his whole poetical career. The "fern," the "dark green Adder's Tongue," the "long lank leaf," are strongly suggestive of that ash-tree dell at Nether Stowey which made so deep an impression on the poet's imagination in the years 1796 and 1797. Professor Dowden has pointed out³ the chief instances of its appearance in Coleridge's verse,—in *This Lime Tree Bower my Prison*, in *Osorio*, and in *Fears in Solitude*. Copies of the first-named poem sent to Southey and Lloyd, in the summer of 1797, shortly after it was composed, describe the "plumey ferns" "sprayed by the waterfall"; in *Osorio* (composed the same summer) the plumey fern has become "the long lank weed," and so it appears in the printed form of *This Lime-Tree Bower*—"the dark green file of long lank weeds." The adder's tongue is not mentioned in any of these poems, but that the "ferns" and "weeds" mean the same plant that is named in *Melancholy* is shown by an entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal (Feb. 10, 1798): "Walked to Woodlands, and to the waterfall. The adder's tongue and the ferns green in the low damp dell." It is further shown by two botanical notes. When Coleridge printed *This Lime-Tree Bower* in the *Annual Anthology* for 1800, he annotated l. 17 as follows :

"*'Of long lank weeds.'* The *Asplenium scolopendrium*, called in some countries the Adder's

tongue, in others the Hart's tongue : but Withering gives the Adder's tongue as the trivial name of the *Ophioglossum* only."

This note was retained in *Sibylline Leaves*, and afterwards. In *Sibylline Leaves* also l. 7 of *Melancholy* has this note :

"A botanical mistake. The plant, I meant, is called the Hart's Tongue ; but this would un- luckily spoil the poetical effect. *Cedat ergo Botanice ;*"

which is merely a modification of the note originally printed in the *Post* :

"A plant found on old walls, and in wells and moist edges.—It is often called the Hart's tongue." ⁴

There can be no doubt that, at least when this note was written, the "fern," the "dark green Adder's Tongue," and the "long lank leaf" of *Melancholy* were identified in Coleridge's mind with the "plumey ferns," the "dark green file of long lank weeds," that so impressed his imagination in the ash-tree dell at Nether Stowey. In view of the fact that no one has found the fragment in print earlier than December, 1797, we are I think justified in believing that *Melancholy* in the form in which we have it was not "a schoolboy performance," and that its "force and distinctness of image" are a product of the great year at Stowey.

This date accords also with Bowles's alleged borrowing mentioned in the letter to Sotheby. But as a matter of fact Bowles was probably thinking of another poem of Coleridge's rather than of *Melancholy*.

The passage to which Coleridge refers is in Bowles's *Coombe Ellen* :

"Here Melancholy, on the pale crags laid,
Might muse herself to sleep ; or Fancy come,
Witching the mind with tender cozenage,
And shaping things that are not."

Coombe Ellen was "written in Radnorshire, September, 1798," and published the same year—

⁴ In the version of *This Lime-tree Bower* sent to Southey in July, 1797, Coleridge had already commented in a note on the "plumey ferns" :—"The ferns that grow in moist places grow five or six together, and form a complete 'Prince of Wales's Feathers,'—that is, plumy."

³ "Coleridge as a Poet," *New Studies in Literature*, 313 ff.

a year after the appearance of Coleridge's fragment in the *Morning Post*. The resemblance is evident, and rather striking. "Pale Melancholy" has "sat retired" since Collins so stationed her in 1748, but she first "mused herself to sleep" in Coleridge's imagination.⁵ Not, however, for the first time in the fragment under consideration.

In the autumn of 1796 Coleridge and Lloyd spent a week with Poole at Nether Stowey, the result of which was a poem to Lloyd, published in the *Poems* of 1797 under the title *To a Young Friend on his Proposing to Domesticate with the Author*. It is an enthusiastic description, very slightly allegorized, of the beauties of nature that will surround the poet and his disciple when they are settled at Stowey. The dell is not pictured sharply and definitely as it was to be later, in the poems of 1797-8, but it is a part of his recollection of the place, recurring more than once in the poem. And this poem it is that one constantly recalls while reading *Coombe Ellen*. In it are to be found almost all the concrete items of Bowles's description: the dashing torrent, the red berries of the ash, the sheep wandering on the perilous cliff, the towering crag. I should have to copy a large part of both poems to show all the relations and resemblances. Finally, in it occurs the very fancy that Coleridge mentions in the letter to Sotheby, and in the same language, save that a synonym is used:

"Calm Pensiveness might muse herself to sleep."

Here, then, is a sufficient Coleridgean antecedent for Bowles's line, indeed for his whole poem, in a piece he is rather more likely to have seen

than he is to have seen *Melancholy*, tho of course he may well enough have seen both. "About the 6th of September [1797]," says Campbell, "having completed *Osorio* to the middle of the fifth act, [Coleridge] took it over to Shaftesbury to exhibit it to the 'god of his idolatry, Bowles.'" This was his first meeting with the sonneteer. No doubt he took with him, if he had not already sent, a copy of the 1797 *Poems*; very likely he read to Bowles the lines *To a Young Friend, &c.*, very likely also the first draft of *This Lime-Tree Bower*, in connection with the scenes in *Osorio* in which the same material had been used. Coleridge was an impressive reader, especially of his own poetry. Bowles doubtless studied Coleridge's verse with enthusiasm after that meeting; and when, a year later, he found himself in Radnorshire in the midst of scenery such as Coleridge had celebrated, he imitated the lines to Lloyd in *Coombe Ellen*.

Melancholy, I believe, is no more a schoolboy performance than is *Time Real and Imaginary*. Very likely the fancy of *Melancholy* musing herself to sleep was early, a product of the time when Bowles was in the ascendent. It has no necessary connection with Stowey, tho as we have seen he introduced it into his first Stowey poem in 1796. But the lines he printed in the *Morning Post* in December, 1797, and sent to Sotheby in 1802 as a product of his nineteenth year, surely took shape not in 1791 or 1794, but after 1796—after he had seen the Quantocks, and the ash-tree dell in particular.

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⁵ Tho it was from Bowles, apparently, that he learned to feel a special delight in the verb *muse*. It is the best-loved word in Bowles's vocabulary, and became scarcely less a favorite with his young admirers the Pantisocrats. It occurs five times in the first ten sonnets in Gilfillan's edition of Bowles, frequently in association with an evening landscape, a cliff or a hillside with a castle (cf. first two lines of *Melancholy*). It gave a name for Coleridge's *magnum opus* of those days, the *Religious Musings*; it comes in characteristically in the *Monody on the Death of Chatterton*; a sonnet of Lovell's quoted by Cottle (*Reminiscences*, p. 3, Amer. ed. of 1848) cannot avoid it; and Coleridge himself took occasion to ridicule it as a mannerism of the school in the first of the Higginbotham sonnets. It goes back of course to Collins's *Ode to Evening*.

OE. *werg*, *werig* 'ACCURSED'; *wergan* 'TO CURSE.'

The elder school of lexicographers, for example, Ettmüller, *Lex. An. Sax.*, p. 97, Bouterwek, *Ein An. sächs. Glossar.*, p. 297, Grein, *Sprachschatz*, ii, 662-3, treated *werg*, *werig*, *wergan*, &c., meaning 'accursed, to curse,' as having a short vowel. Also the Bosworth-Toller marks the vowel as short, although—unfortunately—entering *werg*, *werig*, *wyrig* under *wearg*. Kluge, *An.*